Jail Term Cited Before It Was Set

Panel Probes Tape Mystery

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By Lou Cannon
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The House Judiciary Committee yesterday directed its staff attorneys to investigate a mysterious reference in a White House transcript of a supposed March 22, 1973, conversation which quotes President Nixon as apparently commenting on an event before it occurred.

Special counsel John Doar said after a committee session yesterday that he will seek to learn whether there was any way the President could have known in advance what sentence would be given to convicted Watergate conspirator G. Gordon Liddy.

The transcript, turned over to the committee Thursday by White House special counsel James D. St. Clair is from the recording of a conversation between Mr. Nixon and his then-chief of staff, H. R. Haldeman. The discrepancy occurs after Haldeman brings up the name of Liddy.

"Liddy is enjoying—Liddy's in jail—he didn't stay out," Haldeman said. "He just said I want to start serving my term. And he's at Danbury general prison and thoroughly enjoying it. It's a little strange."

Replied the President: "That, uh, judge gave him 35 years."

It was not until the following day, March 23, that Liddy was sentenced by Judge John J. Sirica. However, he received a sentence of six years and eight months. It was Liddy's fellow conspirator, E. Howard Hunt, Jr., who the same day was sentenced to 35 years.

This discrepancy angered Democratic members of the committee. Rep. George Danielson of California said it was "confirmation that the cover-up, which began

See IMPEACH, A11, Col. 5

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IMPEACH From A1 [illegible] years and is still going [illegible]

[illegible] the [illegible] to the benefit of [illegible] minority."

[illegible] entire ... of the [illegible] Saturday [illegible] Republican [illegible] failed to [illegible] Maryland [illegible] Republicans [illegible] committee's [illegible]

[illegible] W. Dean III, who was then White House counsel [illegible] Hunt's "blackmail" demands to the President at a meeting in the Oval Office on the morning of March 21, 1973. At one point, Mr. Nixon [illegible] [illegible]sted that this was "a long time thing" and "you better damn well get that done." Told by Dean that Hunt "ought to be given some signal anyway," the President responded, "Well, for Christ's sakes, get it."

The White House lawyers, however, said that Mr. Nixon was often just "taking the role of devil's advocate" in the March 21 discussion and "sometimes merely thinking out loud."

Although $75,000 was delivered to Hunt's lawyer that night, the White House [illegible] contended that Dean had already set the payment in motion before his meet[illegible] [illegible] with the President and that Mr. Nixon's remarks were inconsequential.

The unexpected Republican absentee[ism] was seen by some Democrats as a [illegible] of partisanship. Rep. Don Edwards (D-Calif.) said he regretted the poor attendance because the Saturday session was "by far the most important we ever had" since it gave the members an opportunity to ask questions.

Republicans who did attend minimized the GOP absenteeism. Fish said that "many Republicans face a tough election year" and chose to campaign instead of going to committee.

Those members who did attend not only asked many questions but also made some criticisms of Doar and minority counsel Albert Jenner.

Hogan complained that the summary volume of evidence presented to the committee on Friday contained several inaccuracies. He said that on one occasion the President is quoted as having said, "In politics, everybody bugs everybody else." [illegible] said that the President was merely quoting [illegible] Goldwater (R-[illegible]) when he made the remark.

[illegible] said Doar gave [illegible] presentation, [illegible] [illegible] stated [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] ideal with unauthorized national security leaks.

[illegible] the whole reason [illegible] set up the 'plumbers' [illegible] McClory said.

Jenner, talking outside the committee rooms, had some criticism of his own for White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler who on Friday described the committee proceedings as a "kangaroo court."

"He's a PR man," said Jenner. "What does he know? He's never been here. He's seen nothing."

Doar declined to comment on Ziegler's remarks, telling reporters: "You can judge that for yourselves."

Staff lawyers spent most of the day leading the committee through a 306-page volume summing up the impeachment evidence against the President. The evidence is divided into four categories: Watergate, abuse of presidential powers, refusal of the President to comply with subpoenas from the House Judiciary Committee and willful tax evasion.

Several Republican members who are considered possible impeachment votes on other issues have expressed doubts about the strength of the tax evasion charge.

During the presentation yesterday, Jenner also expressed his doubts, saying that the tax issue "[illegible] rise to the level of an impeachable offense."

Some members of the [illegible] committee [illegible] said that [illegible] impressed with [illegible] staff [illegible] Richard Cates who [illegible] the Watergate [illegible] and Bernard Nussbaum. He went over the evidence surrounding the White House defiance of committee subpoenas.

[illegible] said that the committee had issued eight subpoenas for 147 conversations [illegible] [illegible] summaries and [illegible] He said the tapes the committee [illegible] already been turned over [illegible] the Watergate grand jury [illegible] the Watergate special prosecutor.

[illegible] the evidence [illegible] the committee in the impeachment articles [illegible] and [illegible] that he [illegible] be prepared to [illegible]

Doar is a former Indiana [illegible] public de[illegible] has never been [illegible] impeach[ment] [illegible] Doar's presentation [illegible] termed "[illegible] professional."

[illegible] he added.

[illegible] Monday [illegible] on behalf of the GOP minority [illegible] impeachment.